

# EsoterX ~ If Monsters Don't Exist, Why Are They Out To Get Me?

## The Lenape-Allegewi War: A Native American Titanomachy

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≈ 3 COMMENTS

Tags

anomalies, Giants, History, Native American, teleology, Titans

*"As soon as I begin to want to make my thinking teleological in relation to something else, interest enters the game" – Soren Kierkegaard*



*Fee-fie-foe-fum...*

*History is teleology. We view all historical events as inevitably leading us to the here and now. The meaning of the past is derived from our end of the timeline looking backwards, as if our past selves were eternally future-oriented. When we examine the historical record we are not simply asking the innocent question of what happened, rather are*

*making a hypothesis about how what might have happened led to this – our world, our cultures, our peculiar kind of consciousness. We may sneer at Creationists for suggesting the world is only 6000 years old, and that dinosaur fossils were placed in the ground by a trickster god to test our faith, but the argument is no less solidly teleological than any other historical proposition. We have spent all the time since the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium B.C., when societal complexity outpaced memory, cherry-picking the written records of our forefathers in an effort to explain why today is not like yesterday, and denigrating oral traditions and half-remembered visions of the past as folklore, mythology, and anecdote. History is not forgotten, rather history is molded and smoothed, shaped to fit comfortably into the ideologies which they are circularly said to offer the justification for.*

*Anatomically modern humans have been loitering about the planet for about 200,000 years, and the last common ancestor for chimpanzees and humans is believed to have existed somewhere between two and ten million years ago, and the last common ancestor of Homo sapiens and Homo erectus (our direct genetic predecessors) seems to have appeared about a million years ago, with Neanderthals diverging from the genetic tree some mere 500,000 years ago and purportedly extinct by about 30,000 years ago (a lot of theories have us opening up a can of whoop-ass on the poor brutes). Obviously, this means that for roughly a million years, critters that were not us, but more similar to us than to chimpanzees were running around, until we brought our evolutionary A-Game and outcompeted the whole kit and caboodle. Our modern hubris about our big brains and lack of occipital bun (which if you tune in to any 24 hour news channel is somewhat overstated) maintains that critters that were like us, but not us, spent 800,000 years digging for grubs and generally exhibiting poor manners and worse hygiene, while we evolved into the superior beings that you see on the highway today. It took us 6000 years to go from scratching cuneiform on clay tablets to landing men on the moon, suggesting that the pathway from picking at fleas to civilization might just not be the arduous toil that our teleological interpretation of our own awesomeness holds it to be.*

*Quite conceitedly, we believe that official “history” begins at Sumer, when we started to notate tax records. If you’ve ever tried to write your name in Play-doh, you quickly realize that you have to be fairly serious about the endeavor to produce anything readable by someone else. Thus, the authoritative record of human history quickly became associated with whatever was deemed significant enough to merit the attentions of scribal priests. And priests tend to believe in an end game, that is, they view history teleologically. Everything leads up to the final act, the end of existence explaining each preceding moment. Therefore, we evolved with the supreme confidence that the history of the species was a steady progression from the muck to modernism, and every event is but a signpost leading inexorably to the end of time. The idea that the past is contiguous with the present has been our fundamental precept since the first God-King justified his divine rights by reference to his larger-than-life ancestors. But what if our history, rather than being a straight line progression, is actually a series of fits and starts, collapses and rises, punctuated by vague half-memories of a different existence.*

*By the time Europe realized the world wasn’t flat and decided to capitalize on its newly discovered career in real estate speculation, numerous civilizations had risen and fallen in the New World, including a few that were highly literate. This of course, required us to burn all their books and reduce the folk traditions of the “savages” to pagan mythology. When we inconveniently ran across oddly sophisticated, 5000 year old mound complexes stretching across vast swaths of territory, we (1) assumed that the relatively low technology natives or their ancestors could not possibly have been responsible for them (self-servingly muttering about the lost 13<sup>th</sup> Tribe of Israelites, or in more recent times, Vikings), and (2) if they in any way related to the indigenous populations we encountered, the peoples remaining were the product of collapse, dissolution, and regression. Our teleological inclinations abhor discontinuity, thus when disparate native tribes concurred that a sophisticated civilization of “giants” with serious earthworks construction chops dominated the area until a brutal war eradicated them, historians exerted a great deal of effort trying to prove that it was a fairy tale about the ultimate origins of the Cherokee. The indigenous explanation was that a monstrous tribe called the Allegeui (sometimes Tallegui, preserved in the names of the Alleghany Mountains and River) were driven from the eastern side of the Mississippi in a genocidal war by an alliance of the migrating Lenni-Lenapes and Mengwe. Unsurprisingly, this hack and slash history of the founders*

*of our respective civilizations battling giants to the last man, is repeated cross-culturally, from the Aesir-Vanir Wars of Teutonic mythology, to the South Indian Asura-Deva War, to the Greek Titanomachy. As a species, we seem to have spent many of our formative years hunting down giants.*

*By the time Westerners encountered the Lenni-Lenape, they were happily settled in territory in what is modern day Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware (hence they are more commonly referred to as “the Delaware tribe”), but Lenni-Lenape legends steadfastly maintain that their ancestors originated from the northwestern shores of the Mississippi River, eventually moving into the Ohio Valley looking for more hospitable climes. The problem is that as they scouted across the Mississippi, they noticed the land was already occupied.*

**According to tradition handed down from their ancestors, the Lenni-Lenapes resided for many centuries in a very distant country, in the western part of the American continent. Having resolved to move eastward, they set out in a body in search of a new home, and after a long journey and many nights encampment (i.e., half of one year at a place), they reached the Sipee (Mississippi), where they fell in with another nation, the Mengwe, or Iroquois, who had also emigrated from a distant country for the same purpose. The region east of the Mississippi was occupied by the Allegewi (Alleghany), a powerful and partially civilized people, having numerous large towns defended by regular fortifications and entrenchments. In this country the Lenape, on their arrival, asked to settle. This request was denied by the Allegewi, but permission was granted to pass through the territory, and seek a settlement further eastward. No sooner had they commenced to cross the Mississippi, however, than the Allegewi, perceiving the vast number of the Lenapes, furiously attacked them. The result of this treachery was a long and bloody war between the Lenapes and their allies, the Mengwe, on the one side, and the Allegewi on the other. The latter, after a protracted contest, finding themselves unable to make head against the formidable alliance, and that their very existence, as a tribe, was threatened, abandoned their ancient seats and fled down the Mississippi, from whence they never again returned (Waring, 1889, p136-137).**

*Migration and displacement is pretty much the history of the human race in a nutshell. Bands of unruly folks wander about until they find some prime territory, and determine to grab it, knock some heads and take some names. The Mengwe, understood to be an Iroquoian predecessor, tell similar tales that concur with the Lenni-Lenape version of events. Curiously, these legends emphasize that the Allegewi were not just some unfortunate tribe that happened to be in the way, rather that they were warlike giants, far larger than your average Lenape.*

**And now the spies, who had been sent forward for the purpose of reconnoitering, returned. They had seen many things so strange, that when they reported them, our people half-believed them to be dreams, and for a while regarded them but as the songs of birds. They told, that they had found the further bank of the River of Fish inhabited by a very powerful people, who dwelt in great villages, surrounded by high walls. They were very tall—so tall that the head of the tallest Lenape could not reach their arms, and their women were of higher stature and heavier limbs than the loftiest and largest man in the confederate nations. They were called the Allegewi, and were men delighting in red and black paint, and the shrill war-whoop, and the strife of the spear. Such was the relation made by the spies to their countrymen. This report of the spies increased the fears and dissatisfaction of the Lenapes to such a height, that part agreed to remain in the lands in which they then were, and not to attempt to cross the river occupied by so many hostile warriors. But the greater part declared that they were men, and rather than turn back from a foe, however strong, or leave a battlefield without a blow or a war-whoop, they would march to certain death, and leave their bones in a hostile camp (Jones, 1830, p160-161).**

*Early European explorers in Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland, running across tribes thought to have been Iroquoian in origin, also recorded the indigenous narrative for their presence, noting both the purported monstrous stature of the Allegewi as well as their talent for defensive engineering. It was also said that the Allegewi dominated the local Algonquin tribes and that an isolated remnant of holdouts were holed up in a mountain fortress as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.*

**The name Conestogo seems to have applied to this tribe of Indians long before Penn applied it to them. Evidently the stream and township originally may have taken their name from them. They seem to have some features in common with the Allegewi. They were of gigantic size, (Captain John Smith, in 1608, when on an exploring expedition at the mouth of the Susquehanna, met representatives of this tribe whom he described as of gigantic stature and of magnificent proportions); they were also a warrior tribe, having fortifications and entrenchments for defense; (this we will find later was not a general characteristic of the Indians), and they were renowned in the days of their glory for their valor and undaunted bravery “who, when fighting, never fled, but stood like a wall as long as there was one remaining.” Their palisaded town was on a steep mountain, difficult of access. They had guns and small cannon for defense and were practically impregnable in their mountain fastness. Isolated as they were, they kept the various surrounding Algonquin tribes in complete subjection, so that they did not dare to go to war against them. At the close of the Sixteenth century they were at war with the Mohawks, who suffered almost complete annihilation at their hands. In May, 1663, they were engaged with the Senecas, and with the odds sixteen to one, a little band of one hundred of them (the main body having been absent on an expedition to Maryland), defended themselves in their fort, then sallied out in vigorous onslaught, routed the enemy and put them to flight. Later they engaged with the Iroquois, in league, in as furiously contested warfare as history ever chronicled or human passion and the glory of arms ever contrived. Their encounters were, indeed, desperate, and though their forces were much reduced by smallpox, they were frequently victorious against overwhelming odds. They were finally defeated and conquered. In 1675 the Iroquois, urged and aided by Maryland and “Virginia troops under Major Trueman and Colonel Washington (grandfather of General Washington), who perpetrated, at this time, an act of treachery that later was responsible for Bacon’s rebellion, reduced the Susquehannas to complete subjection and forced them to return to their original lands along the Susquehanna (Lancaster County, 1917, p90).**

*The small number of surviving Allegewi, ravaged by the combined forces of the Lenni-Lenape and Mengwe, were said to have escaped south along the Mississippi, seeking a last refuge among the southerly tribes.*

**The traditions of the Lenni-Lenape, another Algonquian tribe, state that they came from the north, doubtless west of Lake Superior, “where it was cold and froze and stormed, to possess milder lands abounding in game.” Fighting their way, they sojourned in the land of firs, and later arrived on the plains of the buffalo land. Then they “longed for the rich east-land” and their passage across the Mississippi in south Minnesota was contested by the Tallegewi (Tsalagi or Cherokee); these were a tall people who had many large towns and fortifications; they were probably the effigy-builders of the Wisconsin-Minnesota-Iowa region of the old mound-builders. Those who crossed the river, being assisted by the Mengwe (an Iroquoian tribe, Hurons?), eventually expelled the Tallegewi, who fled down the Mississippi. Most of the Lenape remained in the Mississippi valley, but some finally settled in the eastern states, part of whom were known as Delaware (Haddon, 1919, p87).**

*It has been suggested that the last Allegewi, who both Iroquoian and Lenni-Lenape traditions associate with the ancient “Mound-Builders” were absorbed by the more southern Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks. The nearby Cherokee maintain that they originated in the Ohio Valley, fleeing south, and scholars were quick to suggest that*

*the Cherokee tribes represented the amalgamation of the mythical Allegewi with the Choctaw. Now while the Cherokee were no doubt big and tough, they were not giants, but since the sober historian cannot allow for the possibility that giants ever walked the earth, this was greedily seized on as a perfectly reasonable explanation for what is partially recounted in Lenni-Lenape and Iroquoian histories (that is, they kicked some keister and made a successful land grab, herding the decimated Allegewi south), but conveniently ignores multiple indigenous viewpoints that emphasize the Allegewi were a sophisticated race of mound-building giants. This is all wrapped up in a neat little teleological package.*

**The traditions of the Delawares preserved the remembrance of the Talligew or Tallegewi, a powerful nation whose western borders extended to the Mississippi, over whom they, in conjunction with the fierce warrior race of Wyandots or Iroquois, triumphed. The old name of the Mound-Builders is believed to survive, in modified form, in that of the Alleghany Mountains and River; and the Chatta-Muskogee tribes, including the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and other southern Indians of the same stock, are supposed to represent the ancient race. The broad fertile region stretching southward from the Appalachian Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico must have attracted settlers from earliest times. It was latterly occupied by various tribes of this Chatta-Muskogee stock; but intermingled with others speaking essentially different languages, and supposed to be the descendants of the older occupants of the region on whom the Tallegewi intruded when driven out of the Ohio valley. The Cherokees preserved a tradition of having come from the upper Ohio. They have been classed by the Washington ethnologists as a distant branch of the Iroquois stock; but Mr. Hale, finding their grammar mainly Huron-Iroquois, while their vocabulary is largely derived from another source, ingeniously infers that one portion of the despairing Talligewi may have cast in their lot with the conquering race, as the Tlascalans did with the Spaniards in their war against the Aztecs. Driven down the Mississippi till they reached the country of the Choctaws, they, mingling with friendly tribes, became the founders of the Cherokee nation (Wilson, 1892, p103).**

*It would be mighty inconvenient for historians if civilized giants rose and fell in North America long before Western Europe got its grubby little hands on it. Or that pockets of giants in Scandinavia, India, and Greece struggled futilely against the onslaught of diminutive, upstart Homo sapiens. Such notions run counter to the continuous ascendancy of man, as it suggests that the history of sentience and civilization may not be the sole preserve of our particular subspecies of wise ape. It is nearly impossible to understand the full import for the future of what happens now, but the history of hindsight is less about reality, than aesthetic exercise in appreciation of our current position at the top of the Great Chain of Being, or as Voltaire said, "There certainly is no useful or entertaining history but the history of the day. All ancient histories, as one of our wits has observed, are only fables that men have agreed to admit as true; and with regard to modern history, it is a chaos out of which it is impossible to make anything."*

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# thoughts on “The Lenape-Allegewi War: A Native American Titanomachy”

1. said:[Schill MacGuffin](#)

[July 25, 2015 at 10:46 am](#)

*I’m particularly intrigued by the assertion that the Allegewi/Conestogo “had guns and small cannon for defense” of their last redoubt. Were these supposed to have somehow been acquired from the European colonists (itself unlikely at such an early date, and it’s not clear whether the account predates colonization) or were they products of Allegewi technology? Are there any other accounts of indigenous firearms? Might this be evidence of earlier contacts with Europeans (say, Basque fishermen, or lost Roanoke colonists)?*

## **REPLY**

◦ said:[EsoterX](#)

[July 25, 2015 at 10:49 am](#)

*That was indeed puzzling. I haven’t turned up additional references yet, but will post if I find any.*

## **REPLY**

2. said:[Mary-jacq Holroyd](#)

[February 27, 2016 at 12:52 pm](#)

*They are alive and well in Appalachian enclaves of southern WV. Just look at the mountain monster men, or better yet, look up their collective heights.*

## **REPLY**

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